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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8816
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001861

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2018

TAGS: PGOV PREL IS RS

SUBJECT: MFA SAYS RUSSIA HOPES TO CONVENE, BUT WILL NOT
INSIST, ON A MOSCOW MIDDLE EAST CONFERENCE

REF: A. MOSCOW 1515
B. MOSCOW 1375

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Robert Patterson for reasons
1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) MFA Counselor for Israel and Palestine Viktor Simakov told us on June 30 that Russia was satisfied with the June 24 meeting of the Quartet, which agreed that its September session would include discussion of the timing and agenda of the GOR's proposed Moscow Middle East conference. Simakov said that Russia thought conditions were right to hold the conference in July or August, but had bowed to Israel's repeated requests to delay in order to allow more time for progress in its negotiations with the Palestinians (refs). The GOR considered the Israel-Palestine track the priority for the conference and would consider leaving other issues off the agenda, including the Israel-Syria track, if necessary.

¶2. (C) Simakov explained that Russia did not believe the Moscow conference was a "necessity," and would not insist that it take place, but felt that the event could provide a "new impulse" to the process begun by the U.S. at Annapolis. The European and Arab countries were on board for the meeting, and PA President Abbas had overcome his previously equivocal attitude to back the conference wholeheartedly. Moscow was somewhat disappointed in the response from U.S. officials who did not oppose Moscow's proposal, but also did not demonstrate much enthusiasm.

¶3. (C) Palestinian DCM Faed Mustafa told us on June 27 that he believed Russia would continue pressing for a Moscow conference even though it knew that the event might not advance the MEPP. The GOR had been talking about a conference for so long that it would be necessary to hold one in order to "save face." Mustafa understood that the GOR was frustrated by public comments made by Israeli diplomats that suggested Tel Aviv did not believe a Moscow conference necessary (ref B).

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